

Mr. Thomas Wheeler  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Docket # 10-90

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JUL 21 2014

FCC Mail Room

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

I suspect your office, and that of your fellow commissioners and staff, are being inundated with suggestions as to how to best allocate Connect America Fund ("CAF") Phase II support. As a rural resident of California, I respectfully urge the FCC to take appropriate steps to ensure CAF is allocated in a manner to guarantee its goals of providing broadband service to the most rural parts of our country. Whether it is a non-traditional option, like the rural electric cooperative that serves much of my district, or a price cap or rate-of-return carrier, it seems logical to me that a publicly-driven, open and competitive process will yield a solution for Americans on the wrong side of our nation's digital divide. If the status quo hasn't yielded the results we all expect, let's explore other options that encourage both competition and meaningful solutions.

There has been overwhelming response to the rural trials set forth in your Order of January 03, 2014. It is rather remarkable to note that 1,000 expressions of interest were filed with the FCC providing ideas and immediate solutions to the lack of broadband coverage in parts of rural America. More than 200 municipal electric companies and rural electric cooperatives indicated a willingness to continue, and begin, to fill the broadband gaps in rural areas. Obviously, demand for coverage has encouraged these non-traditional organizations to enter the market, which in turn has motivated incumbent providers to revisit how they might provide service in areas of less density. This is a good thing and I commend the FCC for bringing this about.

As the FCC moves forward with CAF Phase II, I encourage you to deliberate thoughtfully to ensure the goals of CAF are realized. The funds behind this initiative are significant. As such, we absolutely need to get this right. If the goal of CAF is to promote access to robust broadband infrastructure, we must take steps to incent those platforms and those entities possessing both the appetite and ability to deploy meaningful solutions in the rural space. This would engender true competition and, thus, affordable pricing and options for consumers.

Rural Californians deserve an open marketplace of providers that understand the needs of rural America. Organizations such as electric cooperatives can be part of the answer, with proper FCC funding. As the FCC establishes the framework in which CAF Phase 2 funds are awarded, we ask that the FCC include electric cooperatives as a group that can carry forward the mission of providing broadband to unserved and underserved areas.

The next five years has the potential of closing a digital divide that now limits opportunities for much of my area. From telemedicine to education, job opportunities to simple daily tasks, next-generation broadband is as essential in rural areas as it is in urban centers. I urge the FCC to resist the temptation of doing things as they have always done them. Instead, promote a well thought out CAF disbursement process that encourages universal access, competition and public input to provide a robust broadband solution for rural America.

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Respectfully yours,

*Richard W. Hendry*